

THOUGHTS
ON THE
CONDITION OF WOMEN,
AND ON THE INJUSTICE OF
MENTAL SUBORDINATION.

BY MARY ROBINSON.

SECOND EDITION.

“ Wherefore are we
“ Born with high Souls, but to assert ourselves?”
Rowe.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN, AND O. REES, NO. 39, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
BY G. WOODFALL, NO. 22, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1799.

THOMAS

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

1840

ADVERTISEMENT.

TO THE PUBLIC,

FINDING that a Work on a subject similar to the following, has lately been published at Paris, Mrs. Robinson is induced to avow herself the Author of this Pamphlet. The first Edition was published in February last, under the fictitious Signature of *Anne Frances Randall*; and the mention of Mrs. Robinson's works was merely inserted with a view to mislead the reader respecting the REAL AUTHOR of the Pamphlet.

London: Printed by G. Woodfall, No. 22, Paternoster-row.

(2)

LETTER, &c. &c.

CUSTOM, from the earliest periods of antiquity, has endeavoured to place the female mind in the subordinate ranks of intellectual sociability. **WOMAN** has ever been considered as a lovely and fascinating part of the creation, but her claims to mental equality have not only been questioned, by envious and interested sceptics; but, by a barbarous policy in the other sex, considerably depressed, for want of liberal and classical cultivation. I will not expatiate largely on the doctrines of certain philosophical sensualists, who have aided in this destructive oppression, because an illustrious British

B female,

female, (whose death has not been sufficiently lamented, but to whose genius posterity will render justice) has already written volumes in vindication of "*The Rights of Woman*."* But I shall endeavour to prove that, under the present state of mental subordination, universal knowledge is not only benumbed and blighted, but true happiness, originating in enlightened manners, retarded in its progress. Let WOMAN once assert her proper sphere, unshackled by prejudice, and unsophisticated by vanity; and pride, (the noblest species of pride,) will establish her claims to the participation of power, both mentally and corporeally.

* The writer of this letter, though avowedly of the same school, disdains the drudgery of servile imitation. The same subject may be argued in a variety of ways; and though this letter may not display the philosophical reasoning with which "*The Rights of Woman*" abounded; it is not less suited to the purpose. For it requires a legion of *Wollstonecrafts* to undermine the poisons of prejudice and malevolence.

In

In order that this letter may be clearly understood, I shall proceed to prove my assertion in the strongest, but most undecorated language. I shall remind my enlightened country-women that they are not the mere appendages of domestic life, but the partners, the equal associates of man: and, where they excel in intellectual powers, they are no less capable of all that prejudice and custom have united in attributing, exclusively, to the thinking faculties of man. I argue thus, and my assertions are incontrovertible.

Supposing that destiny, or interest, or chance, or what you will, has united a man, confessedly of a weak understanding, and corporeal debility, to a woman strong in all the powers of intellect, and capable of bearing the fatigues of busy life: is it not degrading to humanity that such a woman should be the passive, the obedient slave, of such an husband? Is it not repugnant to all the laws of nature, that her feelings, actions, and opinions,

should be controuled, perverted, and debased, by such an help-mate? Can she look for protection to a being, whom she was formed by the all wise CREATOR, to protect? Impossible, yet, if from prudence, or from pity, if for the security of worldly interest, or worldly happiness, she presumes to take a lead in domestic arrangements, or to screen her wedded shadow from obloquy or ruin, what is she considered by the imperious sex? but an usurper of her husband's rights; a domestic tyrant; a vindictive shrew; a petticoat philosopher; and a disgrace to that race of mortals, known by the degrading appellation of the *defenceless sex*.

The barbarity of custom's law in this *enlightened* country, has long been exercised to the prejudice of woman:* and

* The ancient Romans were more liberal, even during the reigns of their most atrocious tyrants: and it is to be presumed that the intellectual powers of British women, were they properly expanded, are, at least, equal to those of the Roman ladies.

even

even the laws of honour have been perverted to oppress her. If a man receive an insult, he is justified in seeking retribution. He may chastise, challenge, and even destroy his adversary. Such a proceeding in MAN is termed honourable; his character is exonerated from the stigma which calumny attached to it; and his courage rises in estimation, in proportion as it exemplifies his revenge. But were a WOMAN to attempt such an expedient, however strong her sense of injury, however invincible her fortitude, or important the preservation of character, she would be deemed a murderess. Thus, custom says, you must be free from error; you must possess an un sullied fame: yet, if a slanderer, or a libertine, even by the most unpardonable falsehoods, deprive you of either reputation or repose, you have no remedy. He is received in the most fastidious societies, in the cabinets of nobles, at the toilettes of coquets and prudes, while you must bear your load of obloquy, and sink beneath the uniting

efforts of calumny, ridicule, and malevolence. Indeed we have scarcely seen a single instance where a professed libertine has been either shunned by women, or reprobated by men, for having acted either unfeelingly or dishonorably towards what is denominated the *defenceless sex*. Females, by this mis-judging lenity, while they give proofs of a degrading triumph, cherish for themselves that anguish, which, in their turn, they will, unpitied, experience.

Man is able to bear the temptations of human existence better than woman, because he is more liberally educated, and more universally acquainted with society. Yet, if he has the temerity to annihilate the bonds of moral and domestic life, he is acquitted; and his enormities are placed to the account of *human frailty*. But if WOMAN advance beyond the boundaries of decorum,

“ Ruin ensues, reproach, and endless shame,

“ And one false step, entirely damns her fame.”

Such

Such partial discriminations seem to violate all laws, divine and human! If WOMAN be the weaker creature, her frailty should be the more readily forgiven. She is exposed by her personal attractions, to more perils, and yet she is not permitted to bear that shield, which man assumes; she is not allowed the exercise of *courage* to repulse the enemies of her fame and happiness; though, if she is wounded,—she is *lost for ever!*

Supposing that a WOMAN has experienced every insult, every injury, that her vain-boasting, high-bearing associate, man, can inflict: imagine her, driven from society; deserted by her kindred; scoffed at by the world; exposed to poverty; assailed by malice; and consigned to scorn; with no companion but sorrow, no prospect but disgrace; she has no remedy. She appeals to the feeling and reflecting part of mankind; they pity, but they do not seek to redress her: she

flies to her own sex, they not only condemn, but they avoid her. She talks of punishing the villain who has destroyed her: he smiles at the menace, and tells her, *she is*, a WOMAN.

Let me ask this plain and rational question,—is not woman a human being, gifted with all the feelings that inhabit the bosom of man? Has not woman affections, susceptibility, fortitude, and an acute sense of injuries received? Does she not shrink at the touch of persecution? Does not her bosom melt with sympathy, throb with pity, glow with resentment, ache with sensibility, and burn with indignation? Why then is she denied the exercise of the nobler feelings, an high consciousness of honour, a lively sense of what is due to dignity of character? Why may not woman resent and punish? Because the long established laws of custom, have decreed her *passive*! Because she is by nature organized to feel every wrong more acutely,

acutely, and yet, by a barbarous policy, denied the power to assert the first of Nature's rights, self-preservation.

How many vices are there that men perpetually indulge in, to which women are rarely addicted. Drinking, in man, is reckoned a proof of good fellowship; and the *bon vivant* is considered as the best and most desirable of companions. Wine, as far as it is pleasant to the sense of tasting, is as agreeable to woman as to man; but its use to excess will render either brutal. Yet man *yields* to its influence, because he is the *stronger-minded* creature; and woman *resists* its power over the senses, because she is the *weaker*. How will the *superiorly* organized sex defend this contradiction? Man will say his passions are stronger than those of women; yet we see women rush not only to ruin, but to death, for objects they love; while men exult in an unmeaning display of caprice, intrigue, and seduction, frequently, without even a zest for the vices they exhibit.

exhibit. The fact is simply this: the passions of men originate in sensuality; those of women, in sentiment: man loves corporeally, woman mentally: which is the nobler creature?

Gaming is termed, in the modern vocabulary, a masculine vice. Has vice then a *sex*? Till the passions of the mind in man and woman are separate and distinct, till the sex of vital animation, denominated soul, be ascertained, on what pretext is woman deprived of those amusements which man is permitted to enjoy? If gaming be a vice (though every species of commerce is nearly allied to it), why not condemn it wholly? why suffer man to persevere in the practice of it; and yet in woman execrate its propensity? Man may enjoy the convivial board, indulge the caprices of his nature; he may desert his home, violate his marriage vows, scoff at the moral laws that unite society, and set even religion at defiance, by oppressing the defenceless; while woman is condemned to
bear

bear the drudgery of domestic life, to vegetate in obscurity, to *love* where she abhors, to *honour* where she despises, and to *obey*, while she shudders at subordination. Why? Let the most cunning sophist, answer me, **WHY?**

If women sometimes, indeed too frequently, exhibit a frivolous species of character, we should examine the evil in which it originates, and endeavour to find a cure. If the younger branches of some of our nobility are superficially polished, and wholly excluded from essential knowledge, while they are regularly initiated in the mysteries of a gaming table, and the mazes of intrigue, can we feel surprized at their soon discovering an aptitude to evince their hereditary follies? We know that women, like princes, are strangers to the admonitions of truth; and yet we are astonished when we behold them emulous of displaying every thing puerile and unessential; and aiming perpetually at arbitrary power, without one
 mental

mental qualification to authorize dominion. From such women, the majority of mankind draw their opinions of sexual imbecility; and, in order that their convenient plea may be sanctioned by example, they continue to debilitate the female mind, for the sole purpose of enforcing subordination.

Yet, the present era has given indisputable proofs, that WOMAN is a thinking and an enlightened being! We have seen a Wollstonecraft, a Macaulay, a Sévigné; and many others, now living, who embellish the sphere of literary splendour, with genius of the first order. The aristocracy of kingdoms will say, that it is absolutely necessary to extort obedience; if all were masters, who then would stoop to serve? By the same rule, man exclaims, If we allow the softer sex to participate in the intellectual rights and privileges we enjoy, who will arrange our domestic drudgery? who will reign (as Stephano says, while we are vice-roys over them)

in

in our household establishments? who will rear our progeny; obey our commands; be our affianced vassals; the creatures of our pleasures? I answer, women, but they will not be your slaves; they will be your associates, your equals in the extensive scale of civilized society; and in the indisputable rights of nature *.

In the common occurrences and occupations of life, what in man is denominated high-spirit, is in WOMAN termed vindictive. If a man be insulted and inflicts a blow upon his assailant, he is called a brave and noble-minded creature! If WOMAN acts upon the same principle of resistance, she is branded as a Zantippe, though in such a situation she would scarcely meet with a Socrates, even if,

* The Mahometans are said to be of opinion that WOMEN have no souls! Some British husbands would wish to evince that they have no SENSES, or at least not the privilege of using them: for a modern wife, I mean to say that which is denominated a *good one*, should neither hear, see, speak, nor feel, if she would wish to enjoy any tolerable portion of tranquillity.

in

in the scale of comparison, she possessed stronger corporeal, as well as mental, powers, than the object of her resentment.

How comes it, that in this age of reason we do not see statesmen and orators selecting women of superior mental acquirements as their associates? Men allow that women are absolutely necessary to their happiness, and that they "had been brutes" without them. But the poet did not insinuate that none but silly or ignorant women were to be allowed the *supreme honour* of unbrutifying man, of rendering his life desirable, and of "smoothing the rugged path of care" with their endearments. The ancients were emulous of patronizing, and even of cultivating the friendship of enlightened women. But a British Demosthenes, a Pythagoras, a Leontius, a Eustathius, or a Brutus, would rather pass his hours in dalliance with an unlettered courtesan, than in the conversation of a Theano, a Themiste,

Themiste, a Cornelia, a Sofipatra, or a Portia. What is this display of mental aristocracy? what but the most inveterate jealousy; the most pernicious and refined species of envy and malevolence?

Let me ask the rational and thinking mortal, why the graces of feminine beauty are to be constituted emblems of a debilitated mind? Does the finest symmetry of form, or the most delicate tint of circulation, exemplify a tame submission to insult or oppression? Is strength of intellect, in woman, bestowed in vain? Has the SUPREME DISPOSER OF EVENTS given to the female soul a distinguished portion of energy and feeling, that the one may remain inactive, and the other be the source of her destruction? Let the moralist think otherwise. Let the contemplative philosopher examine the proportions of human intellect; and let us hope that the immortality of the soul springs from causes that are not merely *sexual*.

Cicero says, "There was, from the beginning such a thing as Reason ; a direct emanation from nature itself, which prompted to good, and averted from evil." Reason may be considered as a part of soul ; for, by its powers, we are taught intuitively to hope for a future state. Cicero did not confine the attribute of Reason to sex ; such doctrine would have been completely Mahometan !

The most celebrated painters have uniformly represented angels as of no sex. Whether this idea originates in theology, or imagination, I will not pretend to determine ; but I will boldly assert that there is something peculiarly unjust in condemning woman to suffer every earthly insult, while she is allowed a sex ; and only permitting her to be happy, when she is divested of it. There is also something profane in the opinion, because it implies that an all-wise Creator sends a creature into the world, with a sexual distinction,
which

which shall authorise the very extent of mortal persecution. If men would be completely happy by obtaining the confidence of women, let them unite in confessing that mental equality, which evinces itself by indubitable proofs that the soul has no sex. If, then, the cause of action be the same, the effects cannot be dissimilar.

In what is woman inferior to man? In some instances, but not always, in corporeal strength: in activity of mind, she is his equal. Then, by this rule, if she is to endure oppression in proportion as she is deficient in muscular power, *only*, through all the stages of animation the weaker should give precedence to the stronger. Yet we should find a Lord of the Creation with a puny frame, reluctant to confess the superiority of a lusty peasant girl, whom nature had endowed with that bodily strength of which luxury had bereaved him.

The question is simply this: Is woman persecuted and oppressed because she is the *weaker* creature? Supposing that to be the order of Nature; let me ask these human despots, whether a woman, of strong mental and corporeal powers, is born to yield obedience, merely because *she is a woman*, to those shadows of mankind who exhibit the effeminacy of women, united with the mischievous foolery of monkies? I remember once, to have heard one of those modern Hannibals confess, that he had changed his regiments three times, because the regimentals were *unbecoming!*"

If woman be the *weaker* creature, why is she employed in laborious avocations? why compelled to endure the fatigue of household drudgery; to scrub, to scower, to labour, both late and early, while the powdered lacquey only waits at the chair, or behind the carriage of his employer? Why are women, in many parts of the kingdom, permitted to follow the plough; to perform the laborious business of the dairy;

dairy ; to work in our manufactories ; to wash, to brew, and to bake, while men are employed in measuring lace and ribands ; folding gauzes ; composing artificial bouquets ; fancying feathers, and mixing cosmetics for the preservation of beauty ? I have seen, and every inhabitant of the metropolis may, during the summer season, behold strong Welsh girls carrying on their heads strawberries, and other fruits from the vicinity of London to Covent-Garden market, in heavy loads which they repeat three, four, and five times, daily, for a very small pittance ; while the male domesticks of our nobility are revelling in luxury, to which even their lords are strangers. Are women thus compelled to labour, because they are of the **WEAKER SEX ?**

In my travels some years since through France and Germany, I often remember having seen stout girls, from the age of seventeen to twenty-five, employed in the most fatiguing and laborious avocations ;

such as husbandry, watering horses, and sweeping the public streets. Were they so devoted to toil, because they were the weaker creatures? and would not a modern *petit maitre* have fainted beneath the powerful grasp of one of these rustic or domestic amazons?

Man is said to possess more personal courage than woman. How comes it, then, that he boldly dares insult the *helpless* sex, whenever he finds an object unprotected? I here beg leave to present a true story, which is related by a polished and impartial traveller.---

“ A foreign lady of great distinction, of a family to whom I had the honour to be well known, was appointed to be married to a young gentleman of equal rank: the settlements were all made, the families agreed, and the day was come for the union. The morning of the same day, the ceremony of the marriage being fixed for the same evening, the lover being young, thought-

thoughtless, and lost with passion, when alone with the bride, insinuated, in the softest and most endearing terms, that he was her husband in every sense but a few trifling words, which were to pass that night from the mouth of the priest; and, that if she loved him, as he presumed she did, she certainly would not keep him one moment in anxiety; much less ten or twelve hours, which must be the case, if she waited for the ceremony of the church. The lady, astonished at what she had heard, discovered in her looks not only the warmest resentment, but resolved in her heart to be amply revenged; and having had an excellent education, was well acquainted with the world, and no stranger to the artifices of designing men in affairs of love; after recovering a little her surprise, determined to keep her temper, and promised with a smile, obedience to her lover's will, and begged him to name the place proper for such a design; which, being mutually agreed on for four in the afternoon, the indiscreet lover, ravished at

his expectation, met, agreeable to appointment, the lady, in a garden leading to the house, where they proposed the interview. When walking together, with all seeming tenderness on both sides, the lady, on a sudden, started from her lover, and threw him a pistol, holding another in her right hand, and spoke to him to this effect : ‘ Remember for what infamous purpose you invited me here : you shall never be a husband of mine ; and such vengeance do I seek for the offence, that, on my very soul, I vow, you or I shall die this hour. Take instantly up the pistol, I’ll give you leave to defend yourself ; though you have no right to deserve it. In this, you see, *I* have honour ; though *you* have none.’

“ The lover, amazed at this unforeseen change, took up the pistol, in obedience to her commands, directing it towards the earth, threw himself at her feet, and was going to say a thousand things in favour of his passion ; the lady gave attention a few minutes,

minutes, pointing the pistol to his breast; while the lover, with a voice confused, and every other appearance of despair, begged her pity and her pardon; declared his love for her was such, that he was deprived of all power of reflection; that he had no views of offending; that all he said was for want of thought, that his reason was absent, and that her beauty was the cause of all.---'Beauty!' says the lady, interrupting him, 'Thou art a villain! I'll hear no more, for one of us must die this moment.'---The lover perceiving her violent anger, and finding that all his soft phrases had no effect on her, in his distraction raised the pistol then in his hand a little higher; thinking, by its appearance in that situation, to affect his admired lady with some terror, while he continued to pursue his defence; but alas! no sooner did the angry fair perceive the pistol of her lover raised breast high, but, that instant being the crisis of her resentment, she fired upon him, and shot him through the heart. He fell; and in falling, being

deprived of both speech and reason, his pistol went off, and the consequence was, her collar bone was broke, and much blood followed. She clapped her handkerchief to the wound, ran to her coach, which was waiting at the garden door, ordered her servant to take care of the dead body, and directed some others to conduct her with the utmost expedition to her father's house ; to whom she related the whole affair. Proper assistance was instantly sent for ; and I being that day at table with the physician of the Court, who was also of this family, went with him ; saw the wound, and was well instructed in the particulars of this adventure. The lady was never so much as called to a trial for the death of her lover ; because all the circumstances proved the truth of what she had related : her promising to marry him that night, was so powerful an argument of her love for the deceased, that no other motive could have produced so dreadful an event. The lady was cured of her wound, threw herself into a convent ;

vent; and, from despair for the loss of her lover, languished a few weeks, and then followed him, as she hoped, to the other world. The brother of the lover, according to the custom of the country, fought the brother of the lady, and killed his antagonist. He flew to Spain for refuge, where I afterwards saw him a colonel in a regiment of that nation."

This short story will prove that the mind of WOMAN, when she feels a correct sense of honour, even though it is blended with the very excess of sensibility, can rise to the most intrepid defence of it. Yet had such a circumstance taken place in Britain, the perpetrator of this heroic act of indignant and insulted virtue, would probably have suffered an ignominious death, or been shut up during the remainder of her days as a confirmed *maniac* *; for HERE woman is placed in

* The fate of Miss Broderick is still recent in the memory of those who either condemned her rashness, or commiserated her misfortunes.

the

the very front of peril, without being allowed the means of self-preservation, and that very resistance which would secure her from dishonour, would stigmatize her in the world's opinion.

What then is WOMAN to do? Where is she to hope for justice? Man who *professes* himself her champion, her protector, is the most subtle and unrelenting enemy she has to encounter: yet, if she determines on a life of celibacy and secludes herself wholly from his society, she becomes an object of universal ridicule.

It has lately been the fashion of the time, to laugh at the encreasing consequence of women, in the great scale of human intellect. Why? Because, by their superior lustre, the overweening and ostentatious splendour of some men, is placed in a more obscure point of view. The women of France have been by some popular, though evidently prejudiced writers, denominated little better than the-devils!

devils ! And yet we have scarcely heard of one instance, excepting in the person of the vain and trifling Madame Du Barry, in which the females of that country have not displayed almost a Spartan fortitude even at the moment when they ascended the scaffold. If there are political sceptics, who affect to place the genuine strength of soul to a bold but desperate temerity, rather than to a sublime effort of heroism, let them contemplate the last moments of Marie Antoinette; this extraordinary WOMAN, whose days had passed in luxurious splendour; whose will had been little less than law ! Behold her hurled from the most towering altitude of power and vanity; insulted, mocked, derided, stigmatized, yet *unappalled* even at the instant when she was compelled to endure an ignominious death ! Let the strength of her mind, the intrepidity of her soul, put to shame the vaunted superiority of man; and at the same time place the female character in a point of view, at once favourable to nature,

ture, and worthy of example. France has, amidst its recent tumultuous scenes, exhibited WOMEN whose names will be the glory of posterity. Women who have not only faced the very front of war*, but thereby sustained the heroic energies of their countrymen, by the force of *example* and the effect of *emulation*. Even the rash enthusiast, CORDAY, whose poniard annihilated the most sanguinary and atrocious monster that ever disgraced humanity, claimed our pity, (even while religion and nature shuddered), as she ascended the fatal scaffold, to expiate the deed she had accomplished.

Let us take a brief retrospect of events in British history, and let the liberal mind dwell with rapture on the heroic affection evinced by the illustrious Eleonora, consort of Edward the First. Tradition may then point out the learned

* The *Demoiselles* FERNIG, who followed, and shared the perils of Dumourier's army.

Elizabeth,

Elizabeth, (with all her *sexual* failings) and then judge whether England ever boasted a more wise or more fortunate sovereign: one, more revered in council; more obeyed in power; or more successful in enterprize. And yet Elizabeth was but a woman! A woman with *all* her sex's frailties*.

“The glories of a part of the reign of Anne, rise thick as the beauties of a constellation; this, the plain of Blenheim, and the field of Ramilies can witness.”

It may not be amiss, for the advantage of my unlettered readers, here to introduce an extract from the learned Vossius, in his treatise *de philologia*, concerning illustrious WOMEN who had excelled in

* An historical writer in his account of Russia, speaking of the *Czarina* Elizabeth, says “her reign was most uncommonly glorious. She abolished all capital punishments, and introduced a species of lenity in the operations of government, before *unknown* in Russia.”

polite

polite literature. It consists chiefly of such female names as he had not before celebrated, among his poets and historians: and the list might have been very much enlarged, since the time that Vossius wrote*.

“It is wrong,” says this learned and liberal author, “to deny that the fair sex are capable of literature; all the old philosophers thought better of them †. Pythagoras instructed not men only, but women; and among them Theano, whom Laertius makes to be his wife, and St. Clement calls the first of women; declaring that she both *philosophized* and wrote *poems*. The Stoics, Epicureans, and even the Academicks, delivered their lessons freely to both sexes, and all conditions. Themiste, the wife of Leontius, to whom there is extant, an epistle of

* About a century and half ago.

† It was reserved for modern Englishmen to question their capability.

Epicurus,

Epicurus, was a disciple of this philosopher.

“Atossa queen of Persia, is said to be the *first* who taught the art of writing epistles.

“In the time of Alexander the Great, flourished Hipparchia, the sister of Metrocles the Cynic, and wife of Crates. She wrote of philosophical arguments, essays and questions to Theodorus, surnamed the Deist.

“Pamphila, the Egyptian, who lived in the time of Nero, wrote eight books of Historical Miscellanies.

“Agallis, of Corcyra, is celebrated for her skill in grammar. She ascribes the invention of the play at ball, to her countrywoman Nauficæ; who is the only one, of all his heroines, which Homer introduces at this diversion.

WAMOW

“Quintilian,

“ Quintilian, celebrated three Roman WOMEN, in words to this effect. Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, contributed much to the eloquence of her sons; and her learned stile is handed down to posterity in her letters. The daughter of Lælius expressed in her conversation the eloquence of her father. There is an oration of ~~the~~ daughter of Quintus Hortensius, delivered before Triumvirs, which will ever be read to the honour of her sex. Quintilian has omitted the learned wife of Varus, and Cornificia the poetess, who left behind her most exquisite epigrams. This WOMAN, who flourished in the reign of Octavius Cæsar, used to say that ‘ *learning alone was free, as being entirely out of the reach of fortune* *’.

“ Catherine of Alexandria was a learned

* Cornificia, happily, did not live in Britain, where learning, and even moderate *mental* expansion, are not thought necessary to female education; at least in the eighteenth century!

WOMAN;

WOMAN; she is said to have disputed with fifty philosophers, at the age of eighteen, and so far to have overcome them by the subtlety of her discourse, as to have converted them to the christian religion.

“ Who was more learned than Zenobia, queen of Palmyra, by religion a Jew? We have the testimony of her conqueror himself, the emperor Aurelian, to her character in his letters to the Roman senate. Trebellius Pollio says, ‘ she spoke Egyptian, read Latin into Greek, and wrote an abridgement both of Alexandrine and Oriental history. Her master, in the Greek, was Dionysius Longinus, who was called a living library, and a walking museum.

“ Sospitratra, wife of the famous Eustathius remembered all the finest passages, of all the poets, philosophers, and orators; and had an almost inimitable talent of explaining them. Though her hus-

D

band

band was a man of high celebrity in learning, yet she so far *out-shone* him, as to *obscure his glory* *; and after his death she took upon her the education of youth.

“ What shall we say of Eustochium, daughter of Paula the Roman, who was learned in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and most assiduous in the study of the sacred scriptures? St. Jerom speaks many things in her praise; there are epistles of the same father, extant, to several illustrious WOMEN, as Paula, Læta, Fabrilla, Marcella, Furia, Demetrias Salvia and Gerontia. Why should we mention others to whom we have letters extant of Am-

* The fear that emulation may, in some instances, produce superiority, probably occasions that illiberal neglect of female genius, and that perseverance in affording British women the contracted and trivial educations which stigmatize the present era. Yet were the youth of the eighteenth century committed to the care of some living females, both manners and morals would greatly be benefited.

brose,

brose, Augustin, and Fulgentius? The compliments of the fathers are testimonies of their learning*.

"Hypatia was the daughter of that Theon of Alexandria, whose writings now remain. She was a vast proficient in astronomy. This woman was murdered, through religious frenzy, by the Alexandrine mob; because she made frequent visits to Orestes, the philosopher.

"At the same time flourished Eudocia, whose name before was Athenais, daughter of Leontius the philosopher, and wife of the emperor Theodosius the younger. She was deep read both in Greek and Latin

* Men of modern education suppose that women are only worthy of receiving *billet doux*, because the extent of their own literary acquirements is that of writing them. And it is to be lamented, that our classical scholars, and men of extensive observation, scarcely condescend to acknowledge that there can be such a thing as a WOMAN of genius.

learning; skilled in poetry, mathematics, and all the philosophical sciences.

“ About the year of Christ, 500, Amalasuenta, the daughter of Theodoric king of the Goths, and wife of Eutharic who was made consul by the emperor Justin, was celebrated both for her learning and her wisdom. PRINCES are said to come and advise with her, and admire her understanding *. She took upon her the administration of affairs, in the name of her son, Athalaric, who was left king, at eight years of age; and whom she instructed in all the polite learning *before unknown to the Goths* †.

“ Helpis,

* If the great men of the present day paid more attention to the genius and good sense of some British women, they would be considerable gainers by the experiment.

† Query. Might not the society of *some* living *English women*, if properly appreciated, tend to the reformation of certain *gothic* eccentricities; as well as, by comparison, produce more masculine energies?

Men

“ Helpis, the learned wife of the learned Boethius flourished in 530. She left behind her hymns to the apostles.

“ Bandonia, the scholar of St. Rade-gund's, wrote the life of her holy mistress. She died in 530.

“ About 650 lived Hilda, an ENGLISH abbess, celebrated by Pits among English writers, and Bede in his ecclesiastical history. She was daughter of Hereric, prince of Deira, and aunt of Aldulph, king of the East Saxons *.

“ About 770 Rictrude, a noble virgin,

Men would be shamed out of their *effeminate* foibles, when they beheld the masculine virtues dignifying the mind of woman.

* This was at a period when English women, (excepting those devoted to celibacy), were rarely taught either to read or write. It cannot be therefore a matter of surprize, that their minds were enervated by monkish superstition ; the origin of those idle tales respecting ghosts, witches, &c.

made great proficiency in literature under her master Alcuin; after whose departure out of England, she shut herself up to her studies in the monastery of Saint Bennet at Canterbury, where she produced many writings.

“ About two centuries lower down, under the emperors Otho I. and II. lived the nun Rhosoitar, skilled both in the Latin and Greek languages. She wrote a panegyrick upon the deeds of the Othos; six comedies, the praises of the Blessed Virgin, and St. Dennis in elegiac verse, with other works.

“ In the year of Christ 1140, flourished Anna Comnena, daughter of Alexius Comnenus, emperor of Constantinople. This WOMAN, in the fifteen books of her Alexiad, which she wrote upon the deeds of her father, displayed equally her eloquence and her learning.

“ St.

“ St. Hildegard of Mentz, was famous about eight years after, and at the same time flourished St. Elizabeth of Schonua, sister of king Ecbert. The monkish writers celebrate them for their visions, which received the sanction of pope Eugenius III. But *we* mention them for their historical, didactical and epistolary writings, a collection of which has been published. St. Catherine Senensis also wrote epistles, and various treatises in the dialogue manner, which are now extant, as well as her life, written by Raimund her confessor, a Dominican friar. Whatever was the sanctity of these women, of their learning we have certain monuments.

“ In the year 1484, under Charles VIII. king of France, flourished Gabriele de Bourbon, princess Trimouille. Catalogues of her various writings are preserved in French authors. About three years after, Cassandra Fidele, a Venetian girl, acquired great applause, by an excellent

oration delivered publicly, in the UNIVERSITIES of PADUA *, in behalf of Bettruri Lamberti, her relation. She won the SUPREME CROWN in PHILOSOPHY! This oration was afterwards printed at Modena.

“ Alike for her own learning, and her patronage of the learned, Margaret of Valois queen of Navarre, merited of mankind. Joan, the daughter of this princess, had by Anthony of Bourbon, Henry the Fourth, king of France, founder of the family now reigning.

“ Bologna boasts several learned WOMEN; among which were Joanna Blanchetta, and Novella Andrea, and the learned Catherina Landa, we read of in Bambo's epistles,

* A Cassandra in the universities of England, at the *present period*, would be considered as one of those literary bugbears, a *female philosopher*, and would consequently be treated with ridicule and contempt.

“ What

“ What shall we say of Joanna married to Philip archduke of Austria, duke of Burgundy, and, by his wife, king of Spain. She answered extempore, in Latin, the orations made to her through the several towns and cities, after her accession *.

“ Sir Thomas More, chancellor of England, had three daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Cæcilia; of whom their father took care that they were not only very chaste but very learned. Because he rightly judged that their chastity would be, by this means, the more secure †.

“ The learning of Fulvia Olympia Morata, daughter of Perigrine Moratus, is evident from writings she has left: and

* Our English sovereign Elizabeth, gave similar proofs of learning on several occasions.

† Read this, ye English fathers and husbands, and retract your erroneous opinions, respecting female education.

that

that Hippolita Taurellas was equal, appears from her writings, collected together with those of Morata.

“ It is needless, in England, to quote Queen Elizabeth, or the lady Jane Grey, as eminent instances of the kind ; because our historians are full of their praises upon the subject.”

Vossius mentions farther only Anne Schurman, a noble WOMAN, whose Latin poetry recommends her to this day. He thinks, that if this catalogue were added to those he had given separately, of the FEMALE POETS and HISTORIANS, sufficient examples would appear in behalf of women, that they were *equally capable of fine literature with the other sex.*

We might add to these, says another author “ the two Le Fevres, among the French : one of them married to Monsieur Dacier ; and the other to the famous Le Clerc : and among ourselves, Mrs. Catherine

rine Philips, Mrs. Cennivre, Mrs. Behn, and Mrs. Elizabeth Singer, (afterwards Mrs. Rowe), as in no degree, according to their *several walks of literature*, inferior to any that have been mentioned."

The name of the Grecian poetess, Sappho, is probably known to almost every reader. Some anecdotes of this celebrated woman, who lived near 600 years before Christ, may be found in the Abbé Barthelimi's *Travels of Anacharsis the Younger*: and in the account of this poetess, preceding Mrs. Robinson's legitimate sonnets.

Since the beginning of the present century, we have seen many examples, not only of natural genius, but of enthusiastic resolution, even in unlearned women; prompted by the purest and most feminine passion of the human soul*. We have known

* A memorable instance of genuine and invincible attachment appeared in the conduct of the misguided and unfortunate Sophia Pringle: and though justice
con-

known WOMEN desert their peaceful homes, the indolence of obscure retirement, and the indulgence of feminine amusements, to brave the very heat of battle, stand to their gun, amidst the smok and din of a naval engagement *; conceal the anguish of their wounds; and, from the very heroism of love, repeatedly hazard their existence. How few men have we seen so nobly uniting the softest passion of the soul, with the enthusiasm of valour. When man exposes his person in the front of battle, he is actuated either by interest or ambition: woman, with neither to impel her, has braved the cannons thunder; stood firmly glorious amidst the din of desolation; ' begrimed and footed in the smok of war †; ' and yet she is, by the indiscriminating or prejudiced, condemned her crime, pity will never refuse a sigh to the memory of her heroic affection.

* Hannah Snell, and several others, equally brave and romantic.

† Shakespeare,

diced

liced part of mankind, denominated the weaker creature.

As another striking example of female excellence, of invincible resolution, of attachment, marking a sublimity of character which will put to shame those puerile cavillers who attempt to depreciate the mental strength of woman, even where it is blended with the most exquisite sensibility, I transcribe the following events, in the words of a brave and liberal British officer; whose feelings and manners, enlightened by philanthropy and polished by learning, will be long remembered with regret and admiration*.

“ Lady Harriet Ackland had accompanied her husband to Canada, in the beginning of the year 1776. In the course of the campaign, she traversed a vast space of country, in different extremities of season, and with difficulties that an European

* The late General Burgoyne.

traveller

traveller will not easily conceive, to attend in a poor hut at Chamblee upon his sick bed.

“ In the opening of the campaign of 1777, she was restrained from offering herself to a share of the fatigue and hazard expected before Ticonderago, by the positive injunctions of her husband. The day after the conquest of that place, he was badly wounded, and she crossed the Lake Champlain to join him.

“ As soon as he recovered, Lady Harriet proceeded to follow his fortunes through the campaign ; and at Fort Edward, or at the next camp, she acquired a two-wheeled tumbrel, which had been constructed by the artificers of artillery, something similar to the carriage used for the mail in the great roads of England. Major Ackland commanded the British grenadiers which were attached to Frazer's corps ; and consequently were always the most advanced post of the army ; their situations

tuations were often so alert, that no person slept out of their clothes.

“ In one of these situations, a tent, in which the Major and Lady Harriet were asleep, suddenly took fire. An orderly serjeant of grenadiers, with great hazard of suffocation, dragged out the first person he caught hold of; it proved the Major. It happened in the same instant, that Lady Harriet had, unknowing what she did, and perhaps not perfectly awake, providentially made her escape, by creeping under the walls of the back part of the tent. The first object she saw, on the recovery of her senses, was the Major, on the other side; and, in the same instant, again in the fire, in search of her. The serjeant again saved him; but not without the Major being very severely burned in the face, and different parts of the body; every thing they had with them in the tent was consumed.

“ This

“ This accident happened a little before the army passed Hudson's river. It neither altered the RESOLUTION nor the cheerfulness of Lady Harriet ; and she continued her progress, a partaker of the fatigues of the advanced corps.

“ The next call upon her FORTITUDE was of a different nature ; and more distressing, as of longer suspense. On the march of the 19th of September, the grenadiers being liable to action every step, she had been directed by the Major to follow the route of the artillery and baggage, which was not exposed. At the time the action began, she found herself near a small uninhabited hut, where she alighted.

“ When it was found that the action was becoming general and bloody, the surgeons of the hospital took possession of the same place, as the most convenient for the care of the wounded. Thus was this lady, in hearing of one continued fire
of

of cannon and musketry for four hours together, with the presumption, from the post of her husband at the head of the grenadiers, that he was in the most exposed part of the action. She had three FEMALE companions ; the Baroness of Reidesel, and the wives of two British officers, Major Harnage, and Lieutenant Reynell : but in the event, their presence served but little for comfort. Major Harnage was soon brought to the surgeons, very badly wounded ; and a little after came intelligence, that Lieutenant Reynell was shot, dead. Imagination will want no help to figure the state of the whole group.

“ From the date of that action, to the 7th of October, Lady Harriet, with her usual serenity, stood prepared for new trials ! And it was her lot, that their severity increased with their numbers. She was again exposed to the hearing of the whole action ; and at last received the shock of her individual misfortune, mixed

E

with

with the intelligence of the general calamity, that the troops were defeated, and that Major Ackland, desperately wounded, was a prisoner.

“ The day of the 8th was passed by Lady Harriet and her companions in inexpressible anxiety : not a tent, not a shed was standing, except what belonged to the hospital : their refuge was among the wounded and the dying. The night of the 8th the army retreated ; and at day-break on the 9th, reached very advantageous ground. A halt was necessary to refresh the troops, and to give time to the batteaux loaded with provisions, to come a-breast.

“ When the army was upon the point of moving after the halt, I received a message from Lady Harriet, submitting to my decision a proposal of passing to the camp of the enemy, and requesting General Gates’s permission to *attend her husband* ! Lady Harriet expressed an earnest solici-

tude to execute her intentions, if not interfering with my designs.

“ Though I was ready to believe, for I had experienced, *that patience and fortitude, in a supreme degree, were to be found, as well as every other virtue,* under the most tender forms, I was astonished at the proposal, after so long an agitation of spirits; exhausted not only for want of rest, but absolutely for want of food; drenched by rains for twelve hours together; that a woman should be capable of such an undertaking as delivering herself to the enemy, probably in the night, and uncertain of what hands she might fall into, appeared an effort, *above human nature!*

“ The assistance I was enabled to give, was small indeed. I had not even a cup of wine to offer her; but I was told she had found, from some kind and fortunate hand, a little rum and dirty water. All I could furnish to her was an open boat, and a few lines, written upon dirty and wet

paper, to General Gates, recommending her to his protection.

“ Mr. Brudenell, the chaplain to the artillery, the same gentleman that had officiated so signally at General Frazer’s funeral, readily undertook to accompany her; and with one *female* servant and the Major’s *valet de chambre*, who had a ball, which he had received in the late action, then in his shoulder, she moved down the river, to meet the enemy! But her distresses were not yet at an end.

“ The night was advanced before the boat reached the enemy’s outposts; and the centinel would not let it pass, nor even come on shore. In vain Mr. Brudenell offered the flag of truce; and represented the state of the extraordinary passenger. The guard, apprehensive of treachery, and punctilious to his orders, threatened to fire into the boat, if she stirred before day-light. Her anxiety and suffering were thus protracted through
seven

seven or eight dark and cold hours, and her reflections upon that first reception could not give her very encouraging ideas of the treatment she was afterwards to expect. But it is due to justice, at the close of this adventure, to say, that she was received and accommodated by General Gates with all the humanity and respect that her rank, her merits, and her fortunes deserved*.

“ Let such as are affected by these circumstances of alarm, hardship, and danger, recollect, that the subject of them was A WOMAN! of the most tender and delicate frame; of the gentlest manners; habituated to all the soft elegancies and refined enjoyments that attend high birth and fortune; and far advanced in a state in which the tender cares, always due to the sex, become indispensably necessary.

* The writer of this letter once knew General Gates, and believes him capable of every thing liberal and humane, which General Burgoyne's statement attributes to his character.

Her mind, alone, was formed for such trials*."

The most argumentative theorists cannot pretend to estimate mental by corporeal powers. If strength or weakness are not allowed to originate in the faculty of thought, Charles Fox, or William Pitt, labouring under the debilitating ravages of a fever, is a weaker animal than the thrice-essenced poppinjay, who mounts his feathered helmet, when he should be learning his Greek alphabet. If strength of body is to take the lead of strength of mind, the pugilist is greater than the most experienced patriot; the uncultivated plough-boy surpasses the man of letters; and the felicity of kingdoms would be as safe in the hands of a savage Patagonian ruler, as under the

* The enlightened and liberal writer of this pathetic story, confesses, that the subject of it was not *masculinely* educated. Yet she displayed the glorious energy of Roman constancy, mingled with affections the most pure, and sentiments the most exalted! An ARRIA or a PORTIA could have done no more,

wiser

stronger faculties of the most accomplished Statesman. By this rule, monarchs should select their cabinets by the standard of measurement; and while the first minister could say with Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, "I am as tall a man as any in Illyria," he may laugh to scorn the most gigantic talents.

This question does not admit of argument; it is self-evident. And yet, though it be readily allowed that the primary requisites for the ruling powers of man, are strong *mental* faculties; woman is to be denied the exercise of that intuitive privilege, and to remain inactive, as though she were the least enlightened of rational and thinking beings. What first established, and then ratified this oppressive, this inhuman law? The tyranny of man; who saw the necessity of subjugating a being, whose natural gifts were equal, if not superior to his own. Let these mental despots recollect, that education cannot *unsex* a woman; that tenderness of soul, and a love of social intercourse, will still

be her's; even though she become a rational friend, and an intellectual companion. She will not, by education, be less tenacious of an husband's honour; though she may be rendered more capable of defending her own,

A man would be greatly shocked, as well as offended, were he told that his son was an idiot; and yet he would care but little, if every action proved that his wife were one. Tell a modern husband that his son has a strong understanding, and he will feel gratified. Say that his wife has a masculine mind, and he will feel the information as rather humbling than pleasing to his self-love. There are but three classes of women desirable associates in the eyes of men: handsome women; licentious women; and good sort of women.—The first for his vanity; the second for his amusement; and the last for the arrangement of his domestic drudgery. A thinking woman does not entertain him; a learned woman does not flatter his self-love, by confessing inferiority; and a woman

man of real genius, eclipses him by her brilliancy.

Not many centuries past, the use of books was wholly unknown to the commonality of females; and scarcely any but superior nuns, then denominated "*learned women*" could either read or write. Wives were then considered as household idols, created for the labour of domestic life, and born to yield obedience. To brew, to bake, and to spin, were then deemed indispensably necessary qualifications: but to think, to acquire knowledge, or to interfere either in theological or political opinions, would have been the very climax of presumption! Hence arose the evils of bigotry and religious imposition. The reign of credulity, respecting supernatural warnings and appearances, was then in its full vigour. The idle tales of ghosts and goblins, and the no less degrading and inhuman persecutions of age and infirmity, under the idea of witchcraft, were not only countenanced, but daily put in practice.

tice. We do not read in history of any act of cruelty practised towards a *male bewitcher* ; though we have authentic records to prove, that many a weak and defenceless woman has been tortured, and even murdered by a people professing Christianity, merely because a pampered priest, or a superstitious idiot, sanctioned such oppression. The *witcheries* of mankind will ever be tolerated, though the frenzy of fanaticism and the blindness of bigotry sink into oblivion.

In or about the year 1759, were published some excellent lines, from the pen of a British woman *, addressed to Mr. Pope, whose cynical asperity towards the enlightened sex was not one of his least imperfections. I shall only give an extract :

* I believe Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the same WOMAN, whose name should be immortalized, for having first introduced to Europe the blessing of INOCULATION.

“ In

" In education all the difference lies,
 WOMEN, if taught, would be as brave, as wise,
 As haughty man, improv'd by arts and rules ;
 Where GOD makes one, *neglect* makes twenty fools,
 Can women, left to weaker women's care,
 Misled by custom, Folly's fruitful heir,
 Told that their charms a monarch may enslave,
 That beauty, like the gods, can kill and save ;
 And taught the wily and mysterious arts,
 By ambush'd dress, to catch unwary hearts ;
 If wealthy born, taught to lisp French, and dance,
 Their morals left, Lucretius like, to chance ;
 Strangers to Reason and Reflection made ;
 Left to their passions, and by them betray'd ;
 Untaught the noble end of glorious Truth,
 Bred to deceive, e'en from their earliest youth ;
 Unus'd to books, nor Virtue taught to prize,
 Whose mind, a savage waste, all desert lies ;
 Can these, with aught but trifles, fill the void,
 Still idly busy, to no end employ'd :
 Can these, from such a school, with virtue glow,
 Or tempting vice, treat like a dang'rous foe ?
 Can these resist when soothing Pleasure woos,
 Preserve their virtue, when their fame they lose ?
 Can these, on other themes, converse or write,
 Than what they hear all day, and dream all night ?

Not

Not so the Roman female fame was spread,
 Not so was CLELIA or LUCRETIA bred !
 Not so such heroines true glory fought,
 Not so was PORTIA or CORNELIA taught.
 PORTIA, the glory of the female race ;
 PORTIA, more lovely in her *mind* than face ;
 Early inform'd by *Truth's* unerring beam,
 What to reject, what justly to esteem.
 Taught by *Philosophy*, all *moral good* ;
 How to repel, in youth, th' impetuous blood :
 How ev'ry darling passion to subdue ;
 And Fame, through *Reason's* avenues, pursue.
 Of Cato born ; to noble Brutus join'd ;
 Supreme in beauty, with a ROMAN MIND !”

The women, the Sévigné's, the Daciers,
 the Rolands, and the Genlis's of France,
 were the first, of modern times, to shake
 off the yoke of sexual tyranny. The wi-
 dow of Scarron, (afterwards Madame de
 Maintenon,) was an ornament to her sex,
 till she became the dupe of a profligate
 monarch, and the instrument of bigot per-
 secution. The freezing restraint which
 custom placed on the manners of other
 nations,

nations, and which is as far removed from true delicacy as the earth is from the heavens, in France, threw no chilling impediment on the progress of intellect. Men soon found by experience, that society was embellished, conversation enlivened, and emulation excited, by an intercourse of ideas. The younger branches of male nobility in France, were given to the care of female preceptors; and the rising generations of women, by habit, were considered as the rational associates of man. Both reason and society benefited by the change; for though the monasteries had less living victims, though monks had fewer proselytes, the republic of letters had more ornaments of genius and imagination.

Women soon became the idols of a polished people. They were admitted into the councils of statesmen, the cabinets of princes. The influence they obtained contributed greatly towards that urbanity of manners which marked the reign

reign of Louis the Sixteenth. The tyrants of France, at the toilettes of enlightened WOMEN, were taught to shudder at the horrors of a Bastille: which was never more crowded with victims, than when bigotry and priestcraft were in their most exulting zenith. I will not attempt to philosophize how far the influence of reason actuated on more recent events. That hypothesis can only be defined by posterity.

It is an indisputable fact that a *woman*, (excepting in some cases of supposed witchcraft) if thrown into the water, has, as Falstaffe says, 'a strange alacrity at sinking.' And yet a woman must not be taught to swim; it is not feminine! though it is perfectly masculine to let a woman drown merely because she is a woman, and denied the knowledge of preserving her existence. • In this art the savages of Oreehoua and Tahoorā are initiated from their infancy; the females of those islands are early taught the necessary

cessary faculty of self-defence. They are familiarized to the limpid element at so early a period that a child of four years old, dropped into the sea, not only betrays no symptoms of fear, but seems to enjoy its situation. The women consider swimming as one of their favourite diversions; in which they amuse themselves when the impetuosity of the dreadful surf that breaks upon their coast, is increased to its utmost fury, in a manner equally perilous and extraordinary. And yet these courageous females are denominated of the *weaker* sex.

A celebrated geographer* remarks, that "the best test of civilization, is the respect that is shewn to women."

The little regard shewn to the talents of women in this country, strongly characterizes the manners of the people. The Areopagites, once put a boy to death

* Salmon.

for putting out the eyes of a bird : and they argued thus, says an elegant writer, *il ne s'agit point là d'une condamnation pour crime, mais d'un jugement de mœurs, dans une republique fondée sur les mœurs.*

Heaven forbid that the criterion of this national and necessary good, should be drawn from the conduct of mankind towards British women. There is no country, at this epocha, on the habitable globe, which can produce so many exalted and illustrious women (I mean mentally) as England. And yet we see many of them living in obscurity ; known only by their writings ; neither at the tables of women of rank ; nor in the studies of men of genius ; we hear of no national honours, no public marks of popular applause, no rank, no title, no liberal and splendid recompense bestowed on British literary women ! They must fly to foreign countries for celebrity, where talents are admitted to be of no sex, where genius, whether it be concealed beneath
the

the form of a Grecian Venus *, or that of a Farnese Hercules, is still honoured *as* GENIUS, one of the best and noblest gifts of THE CREATOR.

Here, the arts and the sciences have exhibited their accomplished female votaries. We have seen the graces of poetry, painting, and sculpture, rising to unperishable fame from the pen, the pencil, and the chissel of our women. History has lent her classic lore to adorn the annals of female literature; while the manners of the age have been refined and polished by the wit, and fancy of dramatic writers. I remember hearing a man of education, an orator, a legislator, and a superficial admirer of the persecuted sex, declare, that " the greatest plague which

* Lady Hamilton, and Helen Maria Williams, are existing proofs, that an English woman, like a prophet, is never valued in her own country. In Britain they were neglected, and scarcely *known*; on the continent, they have been nearly IDOLIZED !

F

fociety

society could meet with, was a *literary woman* !”

I agree that, according to the long established rule of custom, domestic occupations, such as household management, the education of children, the exercise of rational affection, should devolve on woman. But let the partner of her cares consider her zeal as the effect of reason, temporizing sensibility, and prompting the exertions of mutual interest ; not as the constrained obsequiousness of inferior organization. Let man confess that a wife, (I do not mean an *idiot*), is a thinking and a discriminating helpmate ; not a bondswoman, whom custom subjects to his power, and subdues to his convenience. A wife is bound, by the laws of nature and religion, to participate in all the various vicissitudes of fortune, which her husband may, through life, be compelled to experience. She is to combat all the storms of an adverse destiny ; to share the sorrows of adversity, imprisonment, sickness,

ness, and disgrace. She is obliged to labour for their mutual support, to watch in the chamber of contagious disease; to endure patiently, the peevish inquietude of a weary spirit; to bear, with tacit resignation, reproach, neglect, and scorn; or, by resisting, to be stigmatized as a violator of domestic peace, an enemy to decorum, an *undutiful* wife, and an unworthy member of society. Hapless woman! Why is she condemned to bear this load of persecution, this Herculean mental toil, this labour of Syfsiphus; this more than Ixion's sufferings, as fabled by heathen mythologists? Because she is of the *weaker sex*!

Tradition tells us that the Laura of Petrarch, whose name was immortalized by the Genius of her lover during twenty years of unabating fondness, could neither *read* nor *write*! Petrarch was a poet and a scholar; I will not so far stigmatize his memory, as to attribute his excessive idolatry to the intellectual obscurity of his

idol. Yet from the conduct of some learned modern philosophers, (in every thing but love), the spirit of cynical observation might trace something like jealousy and envy, or a dread of rivalry in mental acquirements. We have seen living husbands, as well as lovers, who will agree with the author of some whimsical stanzas, printed in the year 1739, of which I remember the following lines,

“ Now all philosophers agree,
That WOMEN should not LEARNED be*:
For fear that, as they wiser grow,
More than their husbands they should know.

* Should modern preceptors object to the classics through fear that the minds of English women would be corrupted by the writings of an Ovid, a Martial, or a Tibullus: let them recollect, that there lived also a Virgil, a Terence, a Lucan, and a Propertius. They should also remember that their native language presents the works of Wycherly, Vanbrugg, Prior, and Rochester; and that they cannot so contaminate, as those of Shakespeare, Denham, Steel, Cowley, Waller, Addison, Shenstone, and many more, can purify.

For

For if we look we soon shall find,
 Women are of a tyrant kind ;
 They love to govern and controul,
 Their bodies lodge a *mighty soul* !
 The sex, like horses, could they tell
 Their equal strength, would soon rebel ;
 They would usurp and ne'er submit,
 To bear the yoke, and champ the bit."

Constrained obedience is the poison of domestic joy: hence we may date the disgust and hatred which too frequently embitter the scenes of wedded life. And I should not be surprized, if the present system of mental subordination continues to gain strength, if, in a few years, European husbands were to imitate those beyond the Ganges. There, wives are to be purchased like slaves, and every man has as many as he pleases. The husbands and even fathers are so far from being jealous, that they frequently offer their wives and daughters to foreigners *.

However

* We have some British *spouses* who already advance half way in this liberal system of participation, stepping

However contradictory it may seem, to contracted minds, I firmly believe that the strongest spell which can be placed upon the human affections, is a consciousness of freedom. Let the husband assume the complacency of the friend, and he will, if his wife be not naturally depraved, possess not only her faith but her affection. There is a resisting nerve in the heart of both man and woman, which repels compulsion. Constraint and attachment, are incompatible: the mind of woman is not more softened by sensibility than sustained by pride; and every violation of moral propriety, every instance of domestic infidelity, every divorce which puts asunder 'those whom God has joined,' is a proof of that maxim being a false, I may say a ludicrous one, which declares that MAN was born to *command*, and WOMAN to *obey*! excepting in proportion as the

somewhat beyond the polished track of Italian *cecisbeos*: it may be said of such husbands as it was of Cataline, that he was *alieni appetens, sui profusus*: greedy after the goods of others, and lavish of his own.

intellectual

intellectual power devolves on the husband.

If a woman receives an insult, she has no tribunal of *honour* to which she can appeal; and by which she would be sanctioned in punishing her enemy. What in man, is laudable; in woman is deemed reprehensible, if not preposterous *. What in man is noble daring, in woman is considered as the most vindictive persecution. Supposing a woman is calumniated, robbed at a gaming table, falsely accused of mean or dishonourable actions, if she appeals to a stranger; "it is no business of his! such things happen every day! the world has nothing to do with the quarrels

* We have a living proof of this observation in the person of Madame D'Eon. When this extraordinary female filled the arduous occupations of a soldier and an ambassador, her talents, enterprize, and resolution, procured for her distinguished honours. But alas! when she was discovered to be a WOMAN, the highest terms of praise were converted into, "eccentricity, absurd and masculine temerity, at once ridiculous and disgusting."

of individuals!" If she involves a dear friend, or a relation in her defence; she is "a dangerous person; a promoter of mischief; a revengeful fury." She has therefore no remedy but that of exposing the infamy of her enemy; (for sexual prejudices will not allow her to fight him *honourably*), even then, all that she asserts, however disgraceful to her opponent, is placed to the account of womanish revenge. The dastardly offender triumphs with impunity, because he is the noble creature man, and she a *defenceless*, persecuted woman.

Prejudice (or policy) has endeavoured, and indeed too successfully, to cast an odium on what is called a *masculine* woman; or, to explain the meaning of the word, a woman of enlightened understanding. Such a being is too formidable in the circle of society to be endured, much less sanctioned. Man is a despot by nature; he can bear no equal, he dreads the power of woman; because he
 knows

knows that already half the felicities of life depend on her; and that if she be permitted to demand an equal share in the regulations of social order, she will become omnipotent.

I again recur to the prominent subject of my letter, viz. that woman is denied the first privilege of nature, the power of SELF-DEFENCE. There are lords of the creation, who would not hesitate to rob a credulous woman of fortune, happiness, and reputation, yet they would deem themselves justified in punishing a petty thief, who took from them a watch or a pocket handkerchief. *Man* is not to be deprived of *his* property; *he* is not to be pilfered of the most trifling article, which custom has told him is necessary to *his* ideas of luxury. But *WOMAN* is to be robbed of that peace of mind which depended on the purity of her character; *she* is to be duped out of all the proud consolations of independence; defrauded
of

of her repose, wounded in the sensibilities of her heart; and, because she is of the *weaker sex*, she is to bear her injuries with *fortitude*.

If a man is stopped on the highway, he may shoot the depredator: and he will receive the thanks of society. If a woman were to act upon the same principle, respecting the more atrocious robber who has deprived her of all that rendered life desirable, she would be punished as a *murderer*. Because the highwayman only takes that which the traveller can afford to lose, and the loss of which he will scarcely feel; and the woman is rendered a complete bankrupt of all that rendered life supportable. The swindler and the cheat are shut out from society; but the avowed libertine, the very worst of defrauders, is tolerated and countenanced by our most fastidious British females. This is one of the causes why the manners of the age are so unblushingly licentious:

tious: *men* will be profligate, as long as *women* uphold them in the practice of seduction.

If, in the common affairs of life, a man be guilty of perjury, on conviction he is sentenced to undergo the penalty of his crime, even though the motive for committing it, were unimportant to the community at large, and only acting against the plea of individual interest. But if a man takes an oath, knowing and premeditatedly resolved to break it, at the altar of the Divinity, his crime is tolerated, and he pleads the force of example, in extenuation of his apostacy. Man swears to love and to cherish his wife, never to forsake her in sickness, or in health, in poverty or wealth, and to keep to her *alone* so long as they both shall live. Let me ask these law makers, and these law *breakers*, these sacriligious oath takers, whether nine out of ten, are not conscious of committing perjury at the moment when they make a vow so universally broken?

But

But man is permitted to *forswear* himself, even at the altar dedicated to the SUPREME BEING! He is allowed, even *there*, to consider the *most* sacred of ceremonies as merely a political institution, of which he may exclusively avail himself as far as it tends to the promotion of his interest, while neither the publicity, nor the number of his infidelities, attach the badge of worldly censure to his conduct. He is still the lordly reveller; the master of his pleasures; the tolerated breaker of his oath: he pleads the frailty of human nature, though he, as the stronger creature, is supposed to possess an omnipotent source of mental power; he urges the sovereignty of the passions, the dominion of the senses, the sanction of long established custom. He is a man of universal gallantry; he is consequently courted and idolized by the generality of women, though all his days and all his actions prove, that woman is the victim of his falsehood.

Now

Now examine the destiny of the *weaker* sex, under similar circumstances. WOMAN is to endure neglect, infidelity, and scorn: she is to endure them patiently. She is not allowed to plead the frailty of human nature; she is to have no passions, no affections; and if she chance to overstep the boundaries of chastity, (whatever witcheries and machinations are employed to mislead her;) if she violates that oath, which, perhaps the pride of her kindred, family interest, ambition, or compulsion, extorted from her, custom, that pliant and convenient friend to man, declares her infamous. While women, who are accessaries to her disgrace, by countenancing her husband's infidelities, condemn the wife with all the vehemence of indignation; because woman is the weaker creature, and most subjected to temptation! because man errs voluntarily; and woman is seduced, by art and by persecution, from the paths of Virtue.

There

There is scarcely an event in human existence, in which the oppression of woman is not tolerated. The laws are made by man; and self-preservation is, *by them*, deemed the primary law of nature. Hence, woman is destined to be the passive creature: she is to yield obedience, and to depend for support upon a being who is perpetually authorised to deceive her. If a woman be married, her property becomes her husband's; and yet she is amenable to the laws, if she contracts debts beyond what that husband and those laws pronounce the necessities of existence. If the comforts, or even the conveniences of woman's life rest on the mercy of her ruler, they will be limited indeed. We have seen innumerable instances, in cases of divorce, where the weaker, the defenceless partner is allotted a scanty pittance, upon which she is expected to live *honourably*; while the husband, the lord of the creation, in the very plenitude of wealth, in the very zenith of splen-

splendour, is permitted openly to indulge in every *dishonourable* propensity. Yet, he is commiserated as the injured party; and she is branded with the name of infamous: though he is deemed the *stronger*, and she the *weaker* creature.

Frailty, through all the stages of social intercourse, appears to be most enormous in those who are supposed to have least fortitude to sustain the powers of self-resistance. Yet, such is the force of prejudice, the law of custom, against woman, that she is expected to *act* like a philosopher, though she is not allowed to *think* like one. If she pleads the weakness of her sex, her plea is not admitted; if she professes an equal portion of mental strength with man, she is condemned for arrogance. Yet, if a General be sent into the field of battle with a force inferior to that of the enemy, and is vanquished, the plea of inequality in resisting powers is admitted, and *his* honour is exonerated from every imputation: WOMAN encounters an all-com-

commanding enemy; *she* is subdued;---
and *she* is eternally dishonoured !

The laws of man have long since decreed, that the jewel, Chastity, and the purity of uncontaminated morals, are the brightest ornaments of the female sex. Yet, the framers of those laws are indefatigable in promoting their violation. Man says to woman, without chastity you are declared infamous; and at the same moment, by a subtle and gradual process, he undermines the purity of her heart, by a bold defiance of all that tends to the support of religion and morality. Man thus commits a kind of mental suicide; while he levels that image to the lowest debasement, which he has ostentatiously set up for universal idolatry.

It is not by precept, but by example, that conviction strikes deeply into the thinking mind. Man is supposed to be the more wise and more rational creature; his faculties are more liberally expanded
by

by classical education : he is supposed to be more enlightened by an unlimited intercourse with society. He is permitted to assert the dignity of his character ; to punish those who assail his reputation ; and to assume a superiority over all his fellow creatures. He is not accountable to any mortal for the actions of his life ; he may revel in the follies, indulge the vices of his *superior* nature. He pursues the pleasures or the eccentricities of his imagination, with an avidity insatiable : and he perpetually *proves* that human passions subjugate *him* to the degradations of human frailty ; while woman, the *weaker* animal, she whose enjoyments are limited, whose education, knowledge, and actions are circumscribed by the potent rule of prejudice, she is expected to *resist* temptation ; to be invincible in fortitude ; strong in prescient and reflecting powers ; subtle in the defence of her own honour ; and forbearing under all the conflicts of the passions. Man first degrades, and then deserts her. Yet, if driven by fa-

G

mine,

mine, insult, shame, and persecution, she rushes forth like the wolf for prey ; if, like Milwood, she finds it " necessary to be rich" in this fordid, selfish world, she is shunned, abhorred, condemned to the very lowest scenes of vile debasement ; to exist in misery, or to perish unlamented. No kindred breast will pity her misfortunes ; no pious tear embalm her ashes : she rushes into the arms of death, as her last, her only asylum from the monsters who have destroyed her.

Woman is destined to pursue no path in which she does not find an enemy. If she is liberal, generous, careless of wealth, friendly to the unfortunate, and bountiful to persecuted merit, she is deemed prodigal, and over-much profuse ; all the good she does, every tear she steals from the downcast eye of modest worth, every sigh she converts into a throb of joy, in grateful bosoms, is, by the world, forgotten ; while the ingenuous liberality of her soul excites the imputation of folly and ex-
trava-

travagance. If, on the contrary, she is wary, shrewd, thrifty, economical, and eager to procure and to preserve the advantages of independence ; she is condemned as narrow-minded, mean, unfeeling, artful, mercenary, and base : in either case she is exposed to censure. If liberal, unpitied ; if sordid, execrated ! In a few words, a generous woman is termed a *fool* ; a prudent one, a *prodigal miser*.

If WOMAN is not permitted to assert a majesty of mind, why fatigue her faculties with the labours of any species of education ? why give her books, if she is not to profit by the wisdom they inculcate ? The parent, or the preceptress, who enlightened her understanding, like the dark lantern, to spread its rays internally only, puts into her grasp a weapon of defence against the perils of existence ; and at the same moment commands her not to use it. Man says you *may* read, and you *will* think, but you shall not evince your knowledge, or employ your thoughts,

beyond the boundaries which we have set up around you. Then wherefore burthen the young mind with a gaudy outline which man darkens with shades indelible? why expand the female heart, merely to render it more conscious that it is, by the tyranny of custom, rendered vulnerable? Let man remember, that

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing.”

Let him not hope for a luxurious mental harvest, where the sun of cultivation is obscured by impenetrable prejudice; that cloud which has too long spread over the mind of woman a desolating darkness. So situated, woman is taught to discriminate just sufficiently to know her own unhappiness. She, like Tantalus, is placed in a situation where the intellectual blessing she sighs for is within her view; but she is not permitted to attain it: she is conscious of possessing equally strong mental powers; but she is obliged to yield, as the weaker creature. Man says, “ you shall be initiated in all the arts of pleasing; but
you

you shall, in vain, hope that we will contribute to your happiness one iota beyond the principle which constitutes our own." Sensual Egotists! woman is absolutely necessary to your felicity; nay, even to your existence: yet she must not arrogate to herself the power to interest your actions. You idolize her personal attractions, as long as they influence your senses; when they begin to pall, the magick is dissolved; and prejudice is ever eager to condemn what passion has degraded.

A French author*, who wrote in the early part of the present century, says, "The empire we exercise over the fair sex is usurped; and that which they obtain over us is by nature. Our submission very often costs them no more than a glance of the eye; the most stern and

* Monsieur Tourriel, author of an Examination whether it was wisely done to abolish that law of the Romans, by which women were kept under the power of guardianship all their lives.

fierce of mankind grow gentle at the sight of them *. What a whimsical conduct it is to dispute with women the right of managing their own estates, while we give up our liberties at so cheap a rate."

The same author, in the same work, says, "It rarely happens, that we share with women the shame of their errors, though we are either the authors, or the accomplices of them. On the other hand, how many follies have we, that are peculiar to ourselves; how many occasions are there where *their* modesty conceals more merit, than *we* can shew, with all our vanity!"

Supposing women were to act upon the same principle of egotism, consulting their own inclinations, interest, and amusement only, (and there is no law of

* If this remark *were* true, it is to be lamented that they do not grow liberal and *unprejudiced* also.

Nature which forbids them ; none of any species but that which is framed by man;) what would be the consequences? The annihilation of all moral and religious order. So that every good which cements the bonds of civilized society, originates wholly in the forbearance, and conscientiousness of woman.

I wish not to advise the sex against cultivating what modern writers term, the GRACES *. I would have woman highly, eminently polished ; she should dance, if her form be well proportioned ; she should sing, if nature has endowed her with the power of conveying that harmony so soothing to the senses. She should draw, paint, and perform fanciful tasks with her needle ; particularly if her frame be delicate, her *intellects* feminine. But if nature has given her strong mental powers, half her

* The mind of woman, in proportion as it is expanded by education, will become refined. Mental emulation would be the best safeguard against the vanity of sensual conquest.

hours of study should be devoted to more important acquirements. She should likewise, if strong and active, be indulged in minor sports; such as swimming, the use of the ball, and foot racing, &c. We should then see British Atalantas, as well as female Nimrods,

However singular it may appear to a reflecting mind, hunting, certainly one of the most barbarous of masculine sports is, in Europe, tolerated as an amusement for the *softer* sex! There again, *weakness* is, by the humane ordinance of man, devoted to persecution. The harmless stag and timid hare are hunted to destruction, even by women!—Why, in this single instance, does man agree in the propriety of masculine pursuits? Why does the husband, without apprehension or disgust, permit the *tender, weak and delicate* partner of his cares to leap a quarry or a five-barred gate, at the same time that he would deem it the excess of arrogance, to offer an opinion, on any subject which

MAN

MAN considers as exclusively adapted to his discussion. I can only conclude that a wife has full permission to break her neck; though she is forbid to think or speak like a rational creature*.

Why are women excluded from the auditory part of the British senate? The welfare of their country, cannot fail to interest their feelings; and eloquence both exalts and refines the understanding†. Man makes woman a frivolous creature, and then condemns her for the folly he inculcates. He tells her, that beauty is her first and most powerful attraction; her second complacency of temper, and

* A husband infers from this conduct, that he permits his wife to act like a *mad-woman*, but he does not allow her to think like a *wise one*.

† Many of the American tribes admit women into their public councils, and allow them the privileges of giving their opinions, *first*, on every subject of deliberation. The ancient Britons allowed the female sex the same right: but in modern Britain women are scarcely allowed to express any opinions at all!

softness

softness of manners. She therefore dedicates half her hours to the embellishment of her person, and the other half to the practice of soft, languishing, sentimental insipidity. She disdains to be strong minded, because she fears being accounted masculine; she trembles at every breeze, faints at every peril, and yields to every assailant, because it would be unwomanly to defend herself. She sees no resemblance of her own character in the Portias and Cornelias of antiquity; she is content to be the epitome of her celebrated archetype, the *good woman* of St. Giles's*!

The embargo upon words, the enforcement of tacit submission, has been productive of consequences highly honourable to the women of the present age. Since the sex have been condemned for exercising the powers of speech, they

* This elegant and estimable female, is represented headless;—and I believe *almost* the only female in the kingdom *universally* allowed to be a *good woman*.

have

have successfully taken up the pen : and their writings exemplify both energy of mind, and capability of acquiring the most extensive knowledge. The press will be the monuments from which the genius of British women will rise to immortal celebrity : their works will, in proportion as their educations are liberal, from year to year, challenge an equal portion of fame, with the labours of their classical *male* contemporaries,

In proportion as women are acquainted with the languages they will become citizens of the world. The laws, customs and inhabitants of different nations will be their kindred in the propinquity of nature. Prejudice will be palsied, if not receive its death blow, by the expansion of intellect : and woman being permitted to feel her own importance in the scale of society, will be tenacious of maintaining it. She will know that she was created for something beyond the mere amusement of man ; that she is capable of men-

tal energies, and worthy of the most unbounded confidence. Such a system of mental equality, would, while it stigmatized the trifling vain and pernicious race of high fashioned Messalinas, produce such British women, as would equal the Portias and Arrias of antiquity *.

• Had fortune enabled me, I would build an UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN; where they should be politely, and at the same time classically educated; the depth of their studies, should be proportioned to their mental powers; and those who were *incompetent to the labours of knowledge*, should be dismissed after a fair trial of their capabilities, and allotted to the more humble paths of life; such as *domestic and use-*

* Pætus being commanded by the emperor Nero, to die by his own hands, his wife, an illustrious Roman woman, was permitted to take leave of him. She felt the impossibility of surviving him, and plunging the poniard into her bosom, exclaimed "*Pætus it is not much,*" and instantly expired. This anecdote I relate for the information of my unlearned readers.

ful occupations. The wealthy part of the community who neglected to educate their female offspring, at this seminary of learning, should pay a fine, which should be appropriated to the maintenance of the unportioned scholars. In half a century there would be a sufficient number of learned women to fill all the departments of the university, and those who excelled in an eminent degree should receive honorary medals, which they should wear as an ORDER OF LITERARY MERIT.

O! my unenlightened country-women! read, and profit, by the admonition of Reason. Shake off the trifling, glittering shackles, which debase you. Resist those fascinating spells which, like the petrifying torpedo, fasten on your mental faculties. Be less the slaves of vanity, and more the converts of Reflection. Nature has endowed you with personal attractions: she has also given you the mind capable of expansion. Seek not the visionary

onary triumph of universal conquest ; know yourselves equal to greater, nobler, acquirements : and by prudence, temperance, firmness, and reflection, subdue that prejudice which has, for ages past, been your inveterate enemy. Let your daughters be liberally, classically, philosophically *, and usefully educated ; let them speak and write their opinions freely ; let them read and think like rational creatures ; adapt their studies to their strength of intellect ; expand their minds, and purify their hearts, by teaching them to feel their mental equality with their imperious rulers. By such laudable exertions, you will excite the noblest emulation ; you will explode the superstitious tenets of bigotry and fanaticism ; confirm the intuitive immortality of the soul, and give

* By Philosophy, the writer of this Letter means rational wisdom ; neither the flimsy cobwebs of pretended metaphysical and logical mysteries ; nor the unbridled liberty which would lead to the boldness of licentious usurpation. A truly enlightened woman never will forget that conscious dignity of character which ennobles and sustains, but never can DEBASE her.

them

them that genuine glow of conscious virtue which will grace them to posterity.

There are men who affect, to think lightly of the literary productions of women : and yet no works of the present day are so universally read as theirs. The best novels that have been written, since those of Smollet, Richardson, and Fielding, have been produced by women : and their pages have not only been embellished with the interesting events of domestic life, portrayed with all the elegance of phraseology, and all the refinement of sentiment, but with forcible and eloquent, political, theological, and philosophical reasoning. To the genius and labours of some enlightened British women posterity will also be indebted for the purest and best translations from the French and German languages. I need not mention Mrs. Dobson, Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Plumptree, &c. &c. Of the more profound researches in the dead languages, we have many female classics of the first celebrity : Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Thomas,

Thomas, (late Miss Parkhurst;) Mrs. Francis, the Hon. Mrs. Damer, &c. &c.

Of the Drama, the wreath of fame has crowned the brows of Mrs. Cowley, Mrs. Inchbald, Miss Lee, Miss Hannah More, and others of less celebrity. Of Biography, Mrs. Dobson, Mrs. Thicknes, Mrs. Piozzi, Mrs. Montagu, Miss Helen Williams, have given specimens highly honourable to their talents. Poetry has unquestionably risen high in British literature from the productions of female pens; for many English women have produced such original and beautiful compositions, that the first critics and scholars of the age have wondered, while they applauded. But in order to direct the attention of my fair and liberal country-women to the natural genius and mental acquirements of their illustrious contemporaries, I conclude my Letter with a list of names, which, while they silence the tongue of prejudice, will not fail TO EXCITE EMULATION.

P. S.

P. S. Should this Letter be the means of influencing the minds of those to whom it is addressed, so far as to benefit the rising generation, my end and aim will be accomplished. I am well assured, that it will meet with little serious attention from the MALE disciples of MODERN PHILOSOPHY. The critics, though they have liberally patronized the works of British women, will perhaps condemn that doctrine which inculcates mental equality; lest, by the intellectual labours of the sex, they should claim an equal portion of power in the TRIBUNAL of BRITISH LITERATURE. By the profound scholar, and the unprejudiced critic, this Letter will be read with candour; while, I trust, *its purpose* will be deemed beneficial to society.

Exeter, Nov. 7, 1798.

P. S. Should this Letter be the means of
 influencing the minds of those to whom
 it is addressed, so far as to benefit the
 rising generation, my end and aim will
 be accomplished. I am well assured
 that it will meet with little serious at-
 tention from the male disciples of
 modern philosophy. The critics
 though they have liberally patronized
 the works of British women, will per-
 haps condemn that doctrine which in-
 culcates mental equality; lest, by the
 intellectual labours of the sex, they
 should claim an equal portion of power
 in the ARCHAEOLOGY OF BRITISH LITERA-
 TURE. By the profound scholar, and
 the unprejudiced critic, this Letter will
 be read with candour; while I trust
 its purport will be deemed beneficial to
 society.

Exeter, Nov. 7. 1798.

L I S T
OF BRITISH
FEMALE LITERARY CHARACTERS

Living in the Eighteenth Century. *

A.

Anspach, Margravine of—Tour to the Crimea, and Dramatic Pieces.

B.

Barbauld, Mrs.—Poems and Moral Writings.

Brooke, Mrs.—Novels and Dramatic Pieces.

Bennet, Mrs.—Novelist.

* In order to escape the imputation of partiality, the names are arranged alphabetically.

C.

Carter, Mrs.—Greek and Hebrew Classic,
Poetess, &c. &c.

Cowley, Mrs.—Poems, Comedies, Tragedies,
&c. &c. &c. &c.

Crespigny, Mrs.—Novelist.

Cosway, Mrs.—Paintress,

D.

Dobson, Mrs.—Life of Petrarch, from the
Italian.

D'Arbley, Mrs.—Novels, Edwy and Elgiva,
a Tragedy, &c. &c. &c.

Damer, Hon. Mrs.—Sculptor, and Greek
Classic.

F.

Francis, Mrs.—Greek and Latin Classic.

Gunning, Mrs.—Novelist.

Gunning, Miss—Novelist, and Translator
from the French,

Hayes,

H.

Hayes, Miss—Novels, Philosophical and
Metaphysical Disquisitions.

Hanway, Mrs.—Novelist.

L.

Inchbald, Mrs.—Novels, Comedies, and
Translations from the French and
German.

L.

Linwood, Miss—Artist.

Lee, Misses—Romances, Comedies, Canter-
bury Tales, a Tragedy, &c. &c.

Lennox, Mrs.—Novelist.

M.

Macauley Graham, Mrs.—History of Eng-
land, and other works.

Montagu,

Montagu, Mrs.—Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare ; being a Defence of him from the Slander of Voltaire.

More, Miss Hannah.—Poems, Sacred Dramas, a Tragedy, and other moral pieces.

P.

Piozzi, Mrs.—Biography, Poetry, British Synonymy, Travels, &c. &c. &c.

Plumptree, Miss—Translations from the German, a Novel, &c.

Parsons, Mrs.—Novelist.

R.

Ratcliffe, Mrs.—Romances, Travels, &c. &c.

Robinson, Mrs.—Poems, Romances, Novels, a Tragedy, Satires, &c. &c.

Reeve, Miss—Romances and Novels.

Robinson, Miss—Novelist.

Seward,

S.

Seward, Miss—Poems, a Poetical Novel, and various other works.

Smith, Mrs. Charlotte—Novels, Sonnets, Moral Pieces, for the Instruction of Youth ; and other works.

Sheridan, late Mrs.—*Sidney Biddulph*, a Novel.

T.

Thomas, Mrs. late Miss Parkhurst—Greek and Hebrew Classic

Thickness, Mrs.—Biography, Letters, &c.

W.

Wolstonecraft, Mrs.—A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Novels, Philosophical Disquisitions, Travels, &c.

Williams, Miss Helen Maria—Poems, Travels, a Novel, and other miscellaneous pieces.

West, Mrs.—Novels, Poetry, &c. &c.

Hearsey,

Y.

Yearley, Mrs.—Poems, a Novel, a Tragedy,
&c. &c.

There are *various degrees of merit* in the compositions of the female writers mentioned in the preceding list. Of their several claims to the wreath of Fame, the Public and the critics are left to decide. Most of them have been highly distinguished at the tribunal of literature.